

VZCZCXRO1333

PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHDA RUEHDBU RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK RUEHKW RUEHLA
RUEHLN RUEHLZ RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHBW #0275/01 0600941
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 010941Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0365
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC 1306
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RXFEAA/HQ AFSOUTH NAPLES IT

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BELGRADE 000275

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

E.O.12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [SR](#) [YI](#)

SUBJECT: KOSOVO SERB PROTEST AT EMBASSY BELGRADE

REFS: A) Belgrade-Watch email of February 27;
B) Pristina Bullets of February 27

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Kosovo-based Serbian National Council (SNV) staged a peaceful demonstration of approximately 10,000 - 20,000 people in front of the U.S. Embassy on February 27 to protest against the Ahtisaari proposal for Kosovo status and alleged USG support for "dividing up" Serbia. The size, expense, and orchestration of the event -- combined with the public support for it from the Prime Minister's DSS and the Socialists and Radicals -- suggest strongly that the Serbian Government helped finance and organize the event. The Charge' met with an SNV delegation prior to the event. END SUMMARY.

THE RALLY

12. (SBU) About 10,000 - 20,000 people gathered for the two-hour afternoon protest. According to the SNV, 120 busloads of protestors came from Kosovo. The Serbian Radical Party (SRS) reportedly also provided buses to bring in people from outside of Belgrade to the protest. A variety of speakers and music were featured on an elevated stage, with rhetoric and banners mostly focused on Kosovo. Many protestors waved banners reading "we will never give up Kosovo," "Kosovo is the heart of Serbia," and pictures of Russian President Putin and Chinese President Hu Jintao with the word "Veto." Some rhetoric was directed against U.S. policy, with signs reading "Yankee Go Home" and "USA World Terrorist."

13. (SBU) The Serbian authorities provided heavy security coverage in front of and around the Embassy. Kneza Milosa Street, a main artery for traffic in Belgrade in front of the Embassy, was blocked off by the police. MSG detachment was on site in observation posts. No untoward incidents occurred. The interior minister called the Charge after the event to inquire as to how his units had performed.

MEETING AT EMBASSY

14. (SBU) The meeting between the Charge' and SNV leaders was calm. Ivanovic stressed that the protest would be peaceful, like the others SNV had organized within Kosovo. Ivanovic passed to the Charge' a copy of a letter protesting the Ahtisaari plan and Kosovo independence (the same text was published widely in newspapers in the weeks leading up to the protest).

15. (SBU) Ivanovic stressed that the Ahtisaari proposal is "unacceptable" and "leaves no opportunity for Serbs to stay in Kosovo." He expressed support for the resolution recently passed by the Serbian parliament. (Note: Parliament convened on 2/14 solely

to repudiate the Ahtisaari plan and reaffirm opposition to Kosovo independence. End note.) He added that the international community had failed to implement UNSCR 1244 and that it is beholden to Albanian interests.

16. (SBU) The Charge' received the letter and thanked the delegation for coming, and said the USG fully supports the rights of the delegation to peacefully demonstrate. He urged them to work constructively within the framework supported by the USG and Contact Group. He added that "key USG objectives" are the right of all citizens of Kosovo to live in safety, the right of return of all Serbs who left Kosovo, as well as Serbia's full integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. He expressed support for the Ahtisaari plan, calling it "fair and balanced."

17. (SBU) In his call to the CDA, Interior Minister Jovic went out of his way to thank us for receiving the SNV delegation, saying that it sent a very positive message that the US is not an unfriendly country and that we have genuine concerns for the welfare of the Kosovo Serbs.

COMMENT

18. (SBU) Despite Ivanovic's assertions to the contrary, most observers believe that this rally enjoyed not only the publicly-announced strong political support of the Prime Minister's DSS, but also logistical and funding support from the Serbian Government. Moderate Kosovo Serb leader Oliver Ivanovic told USOP on February 27 that the Serbian government ordered Kosovo Serbs to participate in the protest and provided transportation to allow them to do so. Ivanovic said that the Serbian government also closed Kosovo Serb parallel schools and other institutions to encourage participation (ref b). The expense of providing dozens of buses,

BELGRADE 00000275 002 OF 002

setting up a stage and high-quality loudspeaker system, and extensive advertising in Serbian print and electronic media suggest that this was not an inexpensive affair. One press report indicated that Kostunica Chief of Staff Nikitovic was spotted at the rally, and rumors abound that he had a direct role in orchestrating the event. Most conclusively, DSS VP Milos Aligrudic told us flat out that the government had provided support - including funding - for the rally, indicating it was a wholly appropriate measure. As it was, aside from snarling traffic along Kneza Milosa and attracting some international media attention, the event was a relatively minor blip for Belgraders.

19. (U) SNV Delegation:

Milan Ivanovic - Leader, Serb National Council
Zdravko Vitosevic - Dean of Kosovo University
Nebojsa Jovic - President of Serb National Council, Kosovska Mitrovica
Momir Kasalovic- Head of Kosovska Mitrovica District

MOORE